PR
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P5A32
1918

CHARLES DICKENS'

LETTER TO COLBURN

CUMBERLAND CLARK.

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CHARLES DICKENS' LETTER TO COLBURN

CHARLES DICKENS'

ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPH COPY

OF HIS LETTER TO HENRY COLBURN UPON

THE CONTROVERSY OCCASIONED

BY THE CONTRIBUTION OF

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

TO

PIC NIC PAPERS

TOGETHER WITH A NOTE TO FORSTER

ON THE SUBJECT

APRIL 1ST, 1841

LONDON

PRINTED AT THE CHISWICK PRESS FOR

CUMBERLAND CLARK

1918

PR
4572
P3 A32
1918

Facsimile Letter

870367

(Copy)

FACSIMILE

Devonshire Terrace
York Gate Regents Park.
April the First 1841.

Sir

As I address you upon a matter of business, and not a mere question of Gentlemanly and courteous treatment, I count upon receiving an answer.

~~Yesterday~~ Last June, Mr Dickens objected to the quality of some essays by Mr Walter Savage Landor which I had forwarded to him for insertion in the Pic Nic Papers, in my capacity as Editor of that work. Mr Forster, himself an intimate friend of Mr Landor's, saw you upon the subject (Things then out of train) and pointed out to you your mistake - and you ~~retracted~~ withdrew - to reconsider it.

Since then, I have received

FACSIMILE

time I requested to see a complete proof of these articles, in which you had - what any communication existing - stopped the Printer some weeks previously before that date. Of these applications you have taken no notice whatever. In the mean time I have withheld my paper, in the hope of bringing you by that means to do your duty.

It is apart from my object to characterise this proceeding of yours in reference to myself or to discuss your competency to sit in judgment on the productions of other Candor I content myself with asserting my right as Editor of the book to choose the matter for its pages, and denying any authority on your part to interfere with my selection.

If the book were publishing as my own property or for my own profit, I should not press this right though I retard its publication a dozen years and want to read the whole. But as the case is one of "charity", and as I cannot resist, a

FACSIMILE

do not hold myself justified in resisting the urgent appeals of the lady for whose benefit our price is to be paid, I will no longer delay it by withholding my contribution. I have therefore to request that you will in reply to this send me back that manuscript of Sandor's which you refuse to print, and in reference to which, you have taken my office upon yourself; - in order that I may return it to the author that respected gentleman with a statement of the circumstances leading to my receiving it. This done, the Printer will receive my tale, and the book will be completed

Charles Dickens

W. H. Wills

FACSIMILE

My dear Forster

Here is a copy of the letter to Colburn – sent along with an unassuming facsimile, to day. Preserve it, for I have no other. The letter to Landor I will write when I have received an answer from this breathing vagabond.

Faithfully Yours always

C. D.

April the First 1841

THE ACCOMPANYING LETTER relates to a rather interesting literary quarrel of Charles Dickens, that with Colburn the publisher; as will be seen by the postscript it is a copy sent to Forster to be preserved.

Dickens' earliest publisher was John Macrone, who published the original issue of the famous "Sketches by Boz" (afterwards taken over by Chapman and Hall, who bought the copyright for £2,250), and though the publisher had rather the best of the bargain with the young author, when Macrone died, leaving a widow and several children in destitute circumstances, Dickens with his usual generosity and large heartedness could not resist the appeal which was made on their behalf, and willingly fell in with a proposal that he should

edit a publication comprised of gratuitous contributions by various authors in aid of Macrone's family.

Henry Colburn was to be the publisher, and the title decided was "The Pic Nic Papers, by Various Hands, edited by Charles Dickens," but, as will be seen by this letter, Colburn's and Dickens' ideas of the duties and privileges of an "Editor" clashed most considerably, and this led to a pretty little quarrel which quite broke off the relations between the two. The incident was responsible for the only letter known in which Dickens used "cuss words"; this letter only came to light a few years ago, and is given in full in Mr. John C. Eckel's "First Editions of Charles Dickens"; in it Dickens says (writing to Leigh Hunt under date July 19, 1842): "Mr. Colburn exercised my duties, and accepted and rejected Papers at his most literary will and pleasure. I resisted this monstrous indecency in Mr. Colburn for a whole year; and then wrote him that as it was a work of charity and I wanted his money for Mrs. Macrone, I would give him his own way—which, if it were my own case, and I wanted bread, I would never do. I damned his eyes (by implication and construction)

at the same time; and declined to hold any further correspondence with him, on any subject. . . . We fell out about a paper of Landor's, which he said 'his literary friend had told him wasn't Protestant'!!!!!!!!"

Here by happy chance is the very letter Dickens refers to, or at least an authentic copy of it in his own hand, with a delightful postscript about the "sneaking vagabond"! To a man of Dickens' sensitive temperament the cool way in which the publisher thus trespassed on the Editor's privileges was enough to anger him to breaking point, but our Author had still further cause of complaint against Colburn—for trade purposes the latter considered the work should run to three volumes, so he calmly annexed an American book called "Charcoal Sketches," by J. C. Neal of Philadelphia, which he added to the "Pic Nic Papers" without a word of acknowledgement as to its source, thus casting a serious slur on Dickens; as late as 1870 the latter was charged by Dr. R. Shelton Mackenzie in his "Life of Dickens" with having helped himself to Neal's sketches when his supply of matter ran short, but the statement is effectually disposed of in a letter from Dickens to

his friend Edmund Yates in 1859, where he emphatically says "of that volume I didn't know and don't know anything."

It is rather interesting to note that about fifteen years later Forster married the widow of Henry Colburn.

CUMBERLAND CLARK.

LONDON.
1918.

1 Devonshire Terrace

York Gate, Regents Park,

April the First 1841

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Since then, I have several times requested to see a complete proof of these articles, in which you had—without any communication with me—stopped the Printer some weeks previously. Of these applications you have taken no notice whatever. In the mean time I have with-held my paper, in the hope of bringing you by that means to do your duty.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

[*Letter on back*]

My dear Forster

Here is a copy of the letter to Colburn—sent, along with an imaginary gauntlet, today. Preserve it, for I have no other. The letter to Landor I will write when I have received an answer from this sneaking vagabond.

Faithfully yours always.

C. D.

April The First 1841.

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